

Michigan Trails at the Crossroads

a Vision for Connecting Michigan



This report was developed by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources in collaboration with the Michigan Department of Transportation.

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Executive Summary

On July 18, 2006, Governor Jennifer M. Granholm announced the state will work with the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund to link Michigan's trail system by building new trails and upgrading existing trails throughout the state.

Michigan's current trail assets represent impressive progress toward completion of an interconnected state trail system serving motorized and non-motorized users.

To achieve an interconnected statewide system in a more systematic, focused, and efficient way, coordinated and concerted action at a statewide level among the many organizations pursuing trail development will be necessary.

Achieving the Governor's vision will require connectivity in all its manifestations: infrastructure, financial, programmatic, stakeholder support, design and technical assistance, maintenance, legal defense, and most of all unified commitment and leadership.

In April 2006, the Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance (MTGA), Michigan's long-standing, non-motorized trail advocacy and promotion organization sponsored a trails summit in Flint, "**C**ONNECTING **M**ICHIGAN: **A** STATE **T**RAILS **P**LANNING **P**ARTNERSHIP." The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) contributed program staff to inform this effort, and held several key roles as facilitators on the MTGA task forces. MTGA expects to release their recommendations by March 2007, and is anticipated to inform many of the issues identified in this paper's "crossroads" discussion.

Because of this coincidence of timing between the issuance of MTGA's recommendations, based upon the input of state agency program staff and organizations representing Michigan's community of interest in trail development, and the Governor's call for action to develop an interconnected statewide trail network, the opportunity exists for the Governor to launch the largest trails initiative in the history of our state.

The launch would announce the creation of a unified system of Michigan trails that connect natural, tourist, and urban destinations, called the "Discover Michigan Trails." Modeled from the Michigan Trailways Act, a designation of the initial set of trails would be established, a Council of diverse interests appointed, and a charge to create a strategy and action plan to achieve the vision for the "Discover Michigan Trails" network, including guiding principles for public trail investments and a dedicated funding source for multi-use trails.



The Governor's Connectivity Announcement

On July 18, 2006, Governor Jennifer M. Granholm announced the state will work with the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund to link Michigan's trail system by building new trails and upgrading existing trails throughout the state. Governor Granholm made the announcement at a 30th anniversary celebration of the trust fund in Traverse City:

"The Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund has made it possible for our state to protect and acquire some of the most scenic lands and unique natural areas of this great state," Granholm said. "As Michigan looks to what the trust fund has accomplished over the last 30 years, we need to also plan for the future. The future I see for Michigan is one where access to trails and recreation is available to everyone."

The Governor's vision of a statewide network of interconnected trails by 2009, builds upon the significant foundation already in place both on the ground and institutionally. Michigan is a national leader in trail development, boasting substantial public trail mileage for motorized and non-motorized use. These existing trail assets reflect significant past investment from a variety of public and private sources, including federal and state natural resource and transportation programs, local units of government, private donors, for-profit and non-profit organizations and foundations. The trails and support systems already in place provide a commanding platform upon which to create a unified approach to connecting and extending Michigan's trails.



"The future I see for Michigan is one where access to trails and recreation is available to everyone."

Governor Jennifer M. Granholm

Trail Benefits

Expansion of Michigan's trail network means the benefits of those trails will be shared more broadly. Communities, especially, seek the economic benefits that trails confer.

- "The annual economic impact of cyclists...is estimated to be almost nine times greater than the one-time expenditure of public funds to construct the bicycle facilities."¹
- "...we estimate the Trail supports 264 jobs statewide"²
- "Each of the 9,000 homes within one-half mile of the Monon Trail enjoys an estimated sales premium of \$13,059."³

While economic benefits might be the first that come to mind, health benefits of trails are no less attractive.

- "Every \$1 investment in trails for physical activity led to \$2.94 in direct medical benefits."⁴
- "More than 60% of trail users in both communities indicated an increase in walking since the building of the trail."⁵

How do Michigan trails and their benefits compare? In 1999, the Department of Park, Recreation and Tourism Resources at Michigan State University, with funding from MDOT's Transportation Enhancement Program, initiated a study to assess the economic benefits of the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail. Researchers reported the following:

- Almost one-third of the people intercepted on the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail were from outside Midland County, and for 75% of them, the Pere Marquette Trail was the primary purpose of the trip.
- 47% of Midland County households reported improvement in health due to use of the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail
- 65% of county households had used the trail in the 12 months prior to the survey, with a typical visitor reporting 15 visits in the past 12 months.
- An estimated 178,000 visits were made to the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail from April to September.

It is clear from the data cited above that by achieving the Governor's vision of a connected Michigan Trail System, Michigan will enhance its attractiveness to tourists, and to businesses and employers seeking to locate in areas with exceptional quality of life amenities. Beyond the transportation, economic, and recreational benefits are the additional opportunities to improve the health and fitness of our citizenry, and the potential thereby to reduce demands on our health care system.

¹ "A Case Study of the North Carolina Northern Outer Banks," Institute for Transportation Research and Education at North Carolina State University; April, 2004

³ "Analysis of the Economic Impacts of the Northern Central Rail-trail," Maryland Greenways Commission, June 1994.

² "Communities Benefit," National Transportation Enhancements Clearinghouse, undated

Snapshot of the Statewide Trail Systems

Michigan's already extensive state trail system is comprised of local, state, and federal trails that provide recreation and transportation opportunities for a variety of motorized and non-motorized uses. Trails that contribute to the overall network range from those specifically acquired and designated for uses by snowmobiles and off-road vehicles, to multi-purpose trails for a variety of non-motorized uses. Paved, wide road shoulders also play an important role by serving as critical connectors that link non-motorized trail segments, while the Michigan Heritage Water Trail Program provides the framework for water trail development. The diversity and magnitude of Michigan's trail development to date is highlighted below:

- Michigan's state forests, national forests, and private lands provide over 6,100 miles of signed, designated and groomed snowmobile trails, and 3,100 miles of signed, designated off-road vehicle (ORV) trails.
- Michigan state forests and parks have more than 3,000 miles of unpaved pathways and public trails serving hikers, mountain bikers, equestrian, and cross-country ski enthusiasts.
- In Michigan, over 1,400 miles of abandoned railroad corridors have been acquired and converted into multi-use trails. Approximately 150 miles of the state owned corridors have been improved, with an additional 70 miles scheduled for improvements in 2007.
- The Michigan Department of Transportation has paved more than 2,500 miles of wide shoulders on state highways which can serve as connections among off-road trail facilities.
- Michigan's scenic natural resources hosts the longest section (875 miles) of the North Country National Scenic Trail—a 4,600 mile long footpath that stretches from New York to South Dakota. When completed this trail will be the longest continuous off-road hiking trail in the United States.
- Michigan Heritage Water Trails is an initiative to connect communities using navigable waterways, and also introduce historical educational experiences along the way. The River Country Heritage Water Trails in St. Joseph County mark over 35 historic sites along approximately 45 miles of Heritage Water Trails.



¹ "Cost-Benefit Analysis of Physical Activity Using Bike/Pedestrian Trails," Guijing Wang, PhD, Caroline A. Macera, PhD, Barbara Scudder-Soucie, Med, Tom Schmid, PhD, Michael Pratt, MD, MPH, David Buchner, MD, MPH, Journal: Health Promotion Practice; April 2005 Vol. 6, No. 2

² "Bone Health and Osteoporosis: A Report of the Surgeon General," US Department of Health and Human Services, 2004

Michigan's Trail System at the Crossroads

Michigan's current trail assets represent impressive progress toward completion of an interconnected state trail system serving motorized and non-motorized users. The trail mileage already in place and operating today represents the cumulative results of an array of public and private interests responding to opportunities to acquire, develop, and operate trail segments as these opportunities arose. To achieve an interconnected statewide system in a more systematic, focused, and efficient way, coordinated and concerted action at a statewide level among the many organizations pursuing trail development will be necessary. Effectiveness has been limited thus far by the following realities:

- Differences among state and federal funding sources requirements
- Differences among involved agencies in statutory, policy, and regulatory parameters governing their participation in trail acquisition and ownerships
- Administrative challenges for trail management and operation among state and local trail owners and operators
- The real or perceived conflicts among the specific interests of trail user groups
- Balancing natural resource and land management objectives when considering development of trails of various types, with each other, and within their environments.

Another reality is the recent legal challenges to state owned trails on former railroad corridors that pose a critical threat to the objectives of trail connectivity, and the future of rail-trails if these disputes are not resolved in the state's favor. Strong legal defense of both MDOT and DNR rights to these corridors is essential to confirm state ownership and provide a foundation to build Michigan's interconnected state trail system.

Despite these realities, all of the various stakeholders, financial contributors, trail users, planners, managers, and supporting communities have arrived at the same crossroads. Everyone is eager to experience Michigan's spectacular natural resources, heritage and communities; everyone recognizes the substantive economic, health, and social benefits of trails; and everyone agrees on the benefits to Michigan's citizens and visitors, that a concerted state level coordination and collaboration to enhance creative investment ideas for trails to meet an ever increasing demand for an interconnected state trail system.

Achieving the Governor's vision will require coordinated action at a statewide level for connectivity in all its manifestations: infrastructure, financial, programmatic, stakeholder support, design and technical assistance, maintenance, legal defense, and most of all unified commitment and leadership.

Trail Term

For the purpose of this paper the word 'trail' is used as an inclusive term to describe all of the various definitions, types, and potential uses that are found within the programs / agencies / departments of the State of Michigan.

Opportunity and Proposed Actions

*“Michigan’s landscape can sustain an extraordinary system of trails that will capture opportunities and imagination. A creative and coordinated statewide plan will radiate energy to harness funding, engender cooperation, induce public involvement, and unite trail thinking across state departments and stakeholders. The resulting trails network will provide transportation, leisure, recreation, social, economic, health, family, and community benefits that allow every Michigan resident to be an active participant and ardent supporter.”**

In April 2006, the Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance (MTGA), Michigan’s long-standing, non-motorized trail advocacy and promotion organization, sponsored a trails summit in Flint, “CONNECTING MICHIGAN: A STATE TRAILS PLANNING PARTNERSHIP.” The summit provided a collaborative forum for local, regional, and statewide planning and development, health, natural resource, and transportation agencies along with numerous trail stakeholder organizations to discuss and define mutual roles and responsibilities for developing an expanded state non-motorized trails system. To help identify and address key issues that currently impede progress on developing a statewide, multi-use trail system for Michigan, thirteen task forces were organized, each focusing on a key issue. DNR and MDOT contributed program staff to inform this effort, and held several key roles as task force facilitators.

MTGA expects to release their recommendations by March 2007. While this report is anticipated to inform many of the issues identified in the previous “crossroads” discussion, their proposals to resolve many of the issues may require action from Michigan’s Executive or Legislative branches.



“The resulting trails network will provide transportation, leisure, recreation, social, economic, health, family, and community benefits that allow every Michigan resident to be an active participant and ardent supporter.”

Proposed Governor's Actions

The Governor's vision of a statewide interconnected trail network enhances the DNR and MDOT efforts with stakeholders such as MTGA. Because of the coincidence of timing between the issuance of MTGA's recommendations and the Governor's call for action to develop an interconnected statewide trail network, the opportunity exists for the Governor to launch the largest trails initiative in the history of our state. The launch would build upon the existing framework of the Michigan Trailways Act to create a unified trail initiative known as the "Discover Michigan Trails". The launch would announce the following actions:

1. Creation of a unified system of Michigan trails that connect natural, tourist, and urban destinations: "Discover Michigan Trails". This could be accomplished by amending the scope and charge of the Michigan Trailways Act.
2. Designation of the initial set of "Discover Michigan Trails".
3. Appointment of a "Discover Michigan Trails" Council, similar to the council enabled under the current Michigan Trailways Act, but expanded in scope across all trail types and in terms of the interests afforded a seat on the Council. Members of the Council would include all state agencies that fund or promote trails and/or active living, and organizations representing the various trail user groups and sponsor constituencies. This would require amending the Michigan Trailways Act. The Governor would charge the Council with the following immediate priority responsibilities:
 - a. Creation of a strategy and action plan to achieve the vision for the "Discover Michigan Trails" network.
 - b. Identification and adoption of guiding principles for public trail investments.
 - c. Coordination of public participation in, and serve as advising body in the creation of the statewide "Discover Michigan Trails" network plan.
 - d. Assessment of needs and development of recommendations to the Governor, Michigan Natural Resources Commission, and Michigan Transportation Commission legislative, administrative, and policy changes to enhance and streamline trail network development.
 - e. Annual reporting of the Council's recommended projects to Michigan Natural Resources Commission and Michigan Transportation Commission priorities for trail improvements and connections.
4. Creation of a dedicated protected funding source for multi-use, non-motorized trail acquisition, development, operation, and maintenance.

Synergy with Current Efforts

The Governor's initiative would energize and enhance collaboration already underway among state agencies committed to trail development. The DNR and MDOT will continue to lead their initiative to cooperatively acquire, develop, and maintain trails. Within this framework, collaboration with other state agencies (MDA, HAL, DEQ, DLEG, MDCH) and key stakeholders will continue to initiate specific priority projects and develop strategies to connect Michigan's trails. Priority decisions for projects to achieve connectivity consider the following outcomes:

- Connections among population centers
- Ties to regional trail systems
- Links to state parks and state forest lands
- Connections to designated heritage routes
- Enhancements to tourism
- Enhancements to economic development
- Improved access to Michigan's Great Lakes shoreline and natural resources
- Synergy with the objectives of Cool Cities, Cities of Promise, Michigan Steps Up, Safe Routes to School, and other priority gubernatorial initiatives
- Engagement of stakeholders in decisions regarding priority trail corridor investments
- Sustainability (acquisition, development, operations and maintenance) of trail systems.
- Preservation of inactive railroad corridors for future railroad use with interim trail use

Case descriptions illustrative of specific trail developments underway or completed in Michigan which demonstrate the achievement of some of the outcomes described above, through collaborative effort are provided in the Appendices entitled "Illustrative Current Efforts".

Layering the Governor's initiative and its direction over these current efforts will create the possibility to accelerate the pace at which the collaborating parties can achieve the vision, and thereby the many benefits an interconnected statewide trail system will bring to the state of Michigan.



Appendices

Illustrative Current Efforts

Connecting West Michigan's Urban Areas and State Parks

Funded trail connectivity projects currently underway in Kent and Ottawa counties will impact the existing 350 miles of trailways in West Michigan. One project will connect the Musketawa State Trail to the Fred Meijer White Pine Linear State Park Trail, near Grand Rapids. This major connection will create significant links to population centers, providing immediate access to trail systems that will allow long-distance trail users in Grand Rapids to head west toward Muskegon and the state parks on Lake Michigan, or to travel north to the state forests in the Cadillac area, or to head south through Grand Rapids' urban center to and beyond, to the farm country in southern Kent County. Nearly \$6 million in Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grants have been awarded to Kent County's Millennium Park, and \$2.1 million in State Recreation Improvement Funds have been granted to the Musketawa State Trail and the Fred Meijer White Pine Linear State Park Trail. Nearly \$7 million in federal transportation funding is available for projects in West Michigan that will enhance trail connectivity by 2009.

KENT COUNTY TRAIL CONNECTIONS

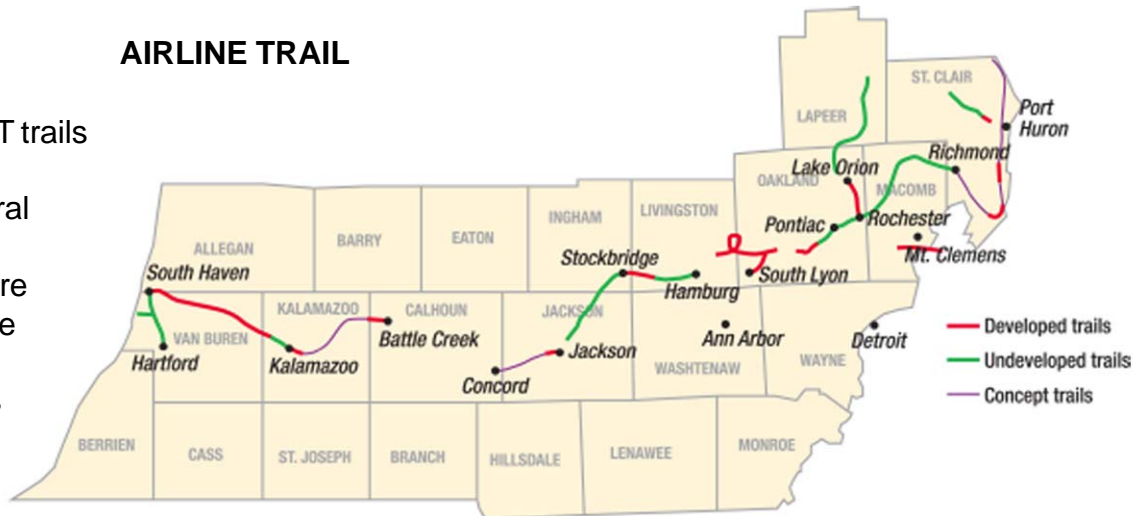


Advocate-Driven Initiatives in Southern Michigan

In the southern Lower Peninsula several local advocate groups have been working on a shore-to-shore trail, following the former Michigan Airline Railway. This trail continues to grow with state support, including the recent DNR Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund acquisition of over eight miles of Falling Waters Trail in Jackson County, for \$350,000.

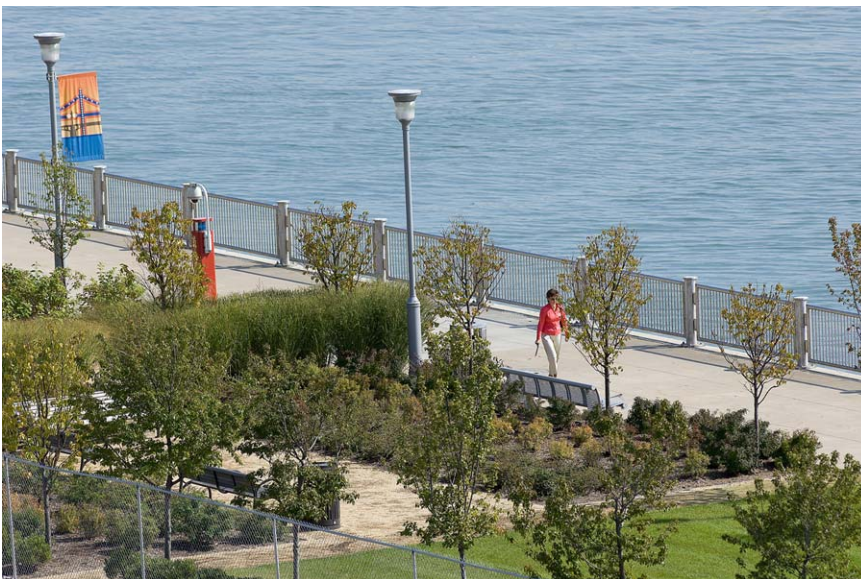
AIRLINE TRAIL

DNR and MDOT trails programs also recognize several regional trail initiatives that are supported by the Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance, which brings the needed local



advocacy for trail connectivity. The Southeast Michigan Community Foundation successfully completed its GreenWays Initiative campaign to raise \$25 million to facilitate local and regional trail planning and development. The money is being used by local units of government as matching funds for state grants. The foundation also is developing a regional greenways vision in collaboration with nearly 250 municipalities in southeast Michigan. Planning workshops were held for each of the region's seven counties and the city of Detroit, and more than 250 people attended a regional event October 17, 2006.

In addition, \$36 million in federal transportation funding is available for high-priority projects in southeast Michigan that will further enhance trail connectivity. These projects will link community neighborhoods to local park and greenway systems, as well as support continued growth of the Detroit Riverfront, with links to Tri-Centennial State Park. These sites have also received over \$4 million in Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund and Land and Water Conservation Fund grants for river front park development.



Trails and Cultural/Economic Development in the Upper Peninsula: Iron Ore Heritage Trail and Chocoday Trail

Michigan's mining heritage is the theme of a regional trail system in Marquette County. The Iron Ore Heritage Trail is currently being planned with assistance from the National Park Service. The DNR recently acquired approximately nine miles of former rail right-of-way from Republic to Humboldt Junction, with \$109,500 of Snowmobile Recreation Trail Program funds to provide a critical section of the heritage trail. Plans now are being developed to connect communities and people to local historic sites, including the Michigan Iron Industry Museum, a public non-profit facility of the Michigan Department of History, Arts and Libraries, who recently received a \$261,000 grant from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund to develop an interpretative trail system. This model develops the way for similar efforts in other historic mining communities in the Upper Peninsula.



MDOT recently announced a \$1.9 million federal Transportation Enhancement Grant has been awarded to Chocoday Township, in Marquette County. The funding will be used to construct a three-mile, non-motorized pathway along US-41 and M-28 in Chocoday Township. The project also will connect an existing bicycle path that runs through Marquette and Harvey with the North Country Trail, located on the former Soo Line Railroad grade along M-28. Construction on the project will begin in 2007. This project, when completed, not only will promote Marquette County's standing as one of the top ten biking communities in the country, it also will provide a significant boost to tourism in the area.

Existing Resources

Michigan currently has a well-developed combination of financial and stakeholder resources that have helped make us a national leader in rail-trail development. This is due to the wide-ranging impact to recreation, transportation, and economic development that they provide. Trails require an extraordinary level of cooperation at all levels to achieve the maximum benefits of their development. Expanding on the resources outlined below will enable us to respond to the challenges outlined by Governor Granholm in her statements at the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund 30th Anniversary celebration in Traverse City.

Financial

Funds for land acquisition and trail development are available through a number of different sources, both public and private. While each funding source has its own set of limitations and requirements it is possible to leverage many different funding sources to complete different phases of the a Statewide, interconnected network of trails. Some of the more commonly utilized sources of trail funding are identified below:

Public Funding

State

The Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF), administered by the Department of Natural Resources, provides grants to the state and local units of government for a wide variety of public outdoor recreation acquisition and development projects. For the 2007 application year, the MNRTF Board of Trustees has adopted changes to their scoring criteria that encourage connectivity of the statewide trail system.

Recreation Improvement Fund

This program is for the operation, maintenance, and development of recreation trails, restoration of lands damaged by off-road vehicles, and inland lake cleanup. These funds are utilized by the DNR for projects related to the state trail system.

Michigan Transportation Fund

Administered by the Michigan Department of Transportation, these funds can be used for on-road facilities such as paved road shoulders and bicycle lanes, or off-road facilities such as shared-use trails and sidewalks. However, many of the improvements on a road, street, or highway, which facilitates non-motorized transportation, can be considered qualified non-motorized expenditures for the purposes of this section.

ORV and Snowmobile Trail Funds

These programs provide grants for the acquisition, development, and maintenance of the state's motorized off-road trail system.

Federal Funding

The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) is a six-year transportation authorization, which included hundreds of specifically-authorized high priority projects. In addition there were \$52 million in high priority trails projects in Michigan. Additionally, the Federal Highway Administration administers a number of different programs authorized by the SAFETEA-LU legislation in which funding can be used for trail development.

The Transportation Enhancement (TE) Grant Program, administered by the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), is another source available for trail acquisition and development. Since the Transportation Enhancement program began in 1992, MDOT has awarded an average of \$8 million per year for the three non-motorized enhancement categories:

- Provision of facilities for pedestrians and bicycles
- Provision of safety and educational activities for pedestrians and bicycles
- Preservation of abandoned railway corridors (including the conversion and use for pedestrian or bicycle trails)

The Recreational Trails Fund is comprised of federal gas taxes that MDOT receives from the Federal Highway Administration and passes on to the DNR for administration and distribution. These funds are for the maintenance and development of recreational trails and related facilities. Annual appropriation by the Michigan Legislature varies, Fiscal Year 2005 Appropriation was \$1,800,000 – approximately \$1,500,000 available for grants.

Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) administered by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources is a grant program to the state and local units of government for the acquisition of land and development of facilities for public outdoor recreation including trails. Revenue for the Land and Water Conservation Fund is generated from offshore oil and gas production. It is made available through federal apportionment to the states. Michigan received less than \$1 million in fiscal year 2006.

Local Funding

Transportation Improvements Program (TIP) and Capital Improvements Program (CIP)

Local units of government can include and fund non-motorized improvements, within road rights-of-ways, as incidental parts of larger transportation projects, and thus these improvements qualify for the same transportation funds as the rest of the roadway construction or improvement project.

Millages, Bonds and Assessments

Local, county, or state millages and bond issues may be passed by voters or governing bodies. A number of Michigan communities have millages for park operations, maintenance, development, and land acquisition. This can be one of the most effective approaches for funding a local trail system initiative.

Private Funding

Foundations and Organized Trails Groups have the ability to raise capital and generate local support for trail acquisition and development projects. Notable examples include:

- *The Southeast Michigan Community Foundations Greenways Initiative*, which recently completed a \$25 million matching funds grant campaign.
- *The West Michigan Trails and Greenways Coalition (WMTGC)*, which has been actively raising money to meet their goal of \$6 million to leverage state and federal grants for the construction of nearly 140 miles of new trails.
- *The Kalamazoo River Valley Trailway Coalition*, which began an \$8 million fundraising campaign in 2006 with the goal of supporting the construction of the 30 mile Kalamazoo River Valley Trailway.

Businesses

Local businesses are frequent partners in the promotion of trail projects in their area. Public-spirited companies understand that the popularity of recreational trails improves the quality of life in their community – an important aspect of economic growth. They can provide meeting rooms, provide small grants, donate copying or printing services on company equipment, or free or reduced-fee use of the company's special services.

Friends Groups and Other Organizations

The long-term success of many trail projects has been due to “friends” groups and advocacy organizations that support a project from inception to implementation. In addition to local fund raising, friends groups can also provide a number of services including physical labor as through “Adopt-a-Trail” maintenance or construction activities, fundraising, user education, promotion, and actual surveillance of the facility.

Civic groups and school groups can also play an important role in support of projects through advocacy, promotion, and hosting events. These organizations are often the best source for identifying local priorities.

Institutional Funding

The Departments of Natural Resources and Transportation have staff for trail planning, acquisition, technical assistance, program management, and policy development. The departments of Environmental Quality, Labor and Economic Growth, and Agriculture support the value of trails in protecting open space and sensitive environmental areas, while providing economic benefits to communities along the trails. The Department of Community Health and the Governor's Council on Physical Fitness recognize the benefits of trails for improving public health, while Travel Michigan and the Department of History, Arts, Libraries have identified the promotion of state recreational trails as an important part of Michigan's tourism industry, outdoor heritage, and outstanding quality of life.

Active Trail Stakeholders

Trails, as with all forms of public recreation, have a strong constituency. Because of the complexity of acquiring, developing and operating these trail systems, the partnerships developed between the state agencies and these supporters are critical to the success of a project. Within Michigan there are a number of stakeholder organizations with interest and involvement in trail development and expansion.

- The Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance (MTGA) – A non-profit group with over 850 members (in 2006) interested in the creation of an interconnected statewide system of trail and greenways for recreation, health, transportation, economic development, and environmental/cultural preservation.
- Michigan Mountain Bike Association (MMBA) – MMBA promotes responsible mountain biking and works toward the goals of common land access and natural resource protection for mountain bicyclists and other trail users. MMBA represented over 2,500 members in 2006.
- League of Michigan Bicyclists (LMB) – LMB supports programs and projects to improve conditions for bicycling in Michigan. The non-profit, tax-exempt organization had 1,500 members in 2006.
- Michigan Horse Council – The Horse Council provides individuals and organizations with a central authority that supports, encourages, supplements, and coordinates efforts of those engaged in the constructive conservation, development, and promotion of the horse community in Michigan. The Council had 65 member organizations which represent more than 10,000 individuals.
- Michigan Recreation and Parks – Founded in 1935 MRPA is a non-profit organization with over 2,000 members representing the interests of leisure service professionals and citizens throughout Michigan.
- Michigan Snowmobile Association – The member organization is dedicated to the improvement of the sport of snowmobiling in Michigan. The MSA is made up of individuals, clubs/councils and businesses, and has over 20,000 members.
- Cycle Conservation Club of Michigan - This off-highway vehicle (OHV) member organization is dedicated to the improvement of the sport of OHV riding on-road and off-road in Michigan. The MCCC has over 2,000 members.
- The Governor's Council on Physical Fitness, Health and Sports
- Regional/Local Trail Groups- Team Playmakers 400 members is comprised of long distance and short distance runners that plan and participate in runs and walks in the Lansing metropolitan area and frequently use the Lansing River Trail.
- Foundations & Non-Profit Organizations

Michigan Trailways Act

The Michigan Statewide Trails Initiative created the trailways in 1992. Trailways are defined by Michigan law as a land corridor passing through the community or countryside that features a broad trail accommodating a variety of public recreation uses; trailways are a type of linear park that links neighborhoods, communities, or recreation resources, or connects to other trailways. Common settings for trailways include inactive railroad rights-of-way and river shorelines. The Initiative also unveiled Michigan's vision to create a statewide interconnected network of multi-purpose trailways.

In 1993 the Michigan legislature passed a three-bill package called the Michigan Trailways Initiative, declaring that a statewide system of trailways will provide for public enjoyment, health, and fitness; encourage constructive leisure-time activities; protect open space, cultural and historical resources, and habitat for wildlife and plants; enhance the local and state economies; link communities, parks, and natural resources; create opportunities for rural-urban exchange, agricultural education, and the marketing of farm products; and preserve corridors for possible future use for other public purposes. The legislature further stated that the planning, acquisition, development, operation, and maintenance of Michigan trailways is in the best interest of the state and is declared to be a public purpose.

Michigan Rail Lines

At the zenith of Michigan's railroad era, more than 9,000 miles of track spanned the landscape, connecting hundreds of communities. Approximately 5,100 miles of railway have been abandoned during the past century.

Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (1971-2005)

The Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund has been the primary provider of funds in the acquisition of the DNR rail-trail system. MDOT federal transportation enhancement funds also have been utilized in a few instances for rail-trail acquisitions. Since its inception, the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund has provided nearly \$87 million in grants for 270 rail acquisition and development projects throughout Michigan.

Trust fund projects have helped the development of significant state trails such as the Hart-Montague, Kal-Haven, Lakelands, Van Buren, Polly-Ann, Musketawa and Betsie Valley, and have created important linkages between cities, including the Gaylord to Cheboygan, Marquette to Munising, Alpena to Rogers City, Mackinac City to Hawks, Hersey to Evart, Bergland to Nestoria, Dollar Bay to Lake Linden, Hancock to Calumet, Ottawa to Muskegon, and Clare to Baldwin.

Regionally significant local trails that have received trust fund support include the VASA, Boardman Lake, Northern Tier, Lansing River Trail, Apple Blossom, Macomb Orchard, Big Rapids Riverwalk, Flat River, Muskegon Lakeshore Trail, Paint Creek Trail, Clinton River Trail, Pigeon River Greenway, Saginaw Valley Rail-trail, Southern Links Trailway and the Dequindre Cut.

State and local partnerships also currently exist on such trails as the Falling Waters, Pere Marquette, White Pine, Betsie Valley, Lakelands, Van Buren and many more.

In addition to the trail investments made through the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund and federal highway transportation enhancement grant programs, there also is \$52 million in high-priority projects funding in the current transportation bill for trails projects in Michigan.

Our Mission

The DNR is committed to the conservation,
protection, management, use and enjoyment
of the state's natural resources
for current and future generations.



"Great Lakes, Great Times, Great Outdoors!"
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